

Gary Clark
Sheriff of Caldwell County

My name is Gary Clark and I am the Sheriff of Caldwell County. Caldwell County is a semi-rural area consisting of a population of approximately 77,000 people. The primary industry in the county is furniture based. With this industry quickly disappearing due to overseas manufacturing and the unemployment rate climbing, we are seeing a frightening increase in the production, sale/distribution and use of Methamphetamine.

Known as "speed," "meth," or "ice," Methamphetamine is an illegal narcotic that can be easily manufactured using recipes found on the Internet and raw materials readily available from the corner pharmacy or convenience store and the neighborhood hardware store. It is manufactured in makeshift labs that can fit into the trunk of a car. The ease of production and relatively low cost of raw materials makes it an illegal product for an industry that is driven by one motive – greed. The manufacturing process itself raises other serious concerns in that it produces toxic byproducts that pose serious environmental concerns. The process itself is highly volatile. Explosion and fire are common with illegal meth labs. Manufacturing “meth” involves a variety of toxic and explosive chemicals, solvents, metals, salts, and corrosives.

The drug also poses a serious threat to children as meth lab seizures in our county have routinely occurred at sites where children live or play. One such example in our county was in fact a daycare for pre-school children. Meth attacks and breaks down all social barriers.

We have found in Caldwell County that there is a direct correlation to meth and increases in robberies, burglaries, domestic violence, assaults, identity thefts, and child neglect.

Limited manpower is the number one issue facing law enforcement in Caldwell County in keeping up with the growing number of clandestine labs and dealers. We have made great strides in combating this epidemic by stiffening laws and limiting accessibility of over the counter medications used for Meth production, however I believe that in order to effectively combat this problem, Federal, State, and local law enforcement must come together to form “task forces” throughout the State. This would enable Caldwell County and smaller jurisdictions with limited resources to address problems as they arise as opposed to prioritizing problems based on severity. Although we have somewhat inhibited the production of meth in the States, we must continue to look for ways to stop its transportation into our country through more aggressive interdiction and maximum penalties for those responsible for this type of violation. The scope of drug awareness and resistance education must continue for our children and must be broadened into the high school levels where the greatest potential for abuse exists. Education is the number one weapon in addressing any problem. The solution to this epidemic as any other epidemic comes with a price. In order for these things to come to fruition, our representatives will have to find ways to funnel resources to Federal, State, and local municipalities, and continue to take a proactive approach.

I appreciate you, our representatives for taking the time to listen.

I hope by informative sessions like this, we can help raise awareness about this issue and encourage all of our citizens to get involved in prevention.